Wet Felted Flowers

There are many tutorials on the Internet for creating wet-felted wool flowers, using different techniques. This is one of the more interesting techniques I found and I’ll report to you here how it worked for me and offer any tips I learned in the process.

I became intrigued by the process of using a "resist" with a hole in the middle, to make two layers at once that would be connected in the center. The first video I found was this one:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpAQJt8u2B0
I liked this next tutorial a little better, using the round resist to keep the shape.
http://www.feltlikesmiling.com/wet-felted-flower-tutorial/

So I decided to go for three flowers at a time, using some pretty variegated merino roving I had, so the colors would vary.

I worked on bubble wrap on a tray, and had a piece of mosquito netting.

I made three piles of wool each with three layers at right angles to each other.

I wet the stacks and placed my donut “resists” on each. Mine are about 4” in diameter.

I pulled the edges in over the donut.

Here I’ve flipped the stacks and put three layers of wool on this side.

I put the netting over the stacks and dampened them, and then flipped them all again.

They are back on the first side, where I pulled in the fringes and I’ve tried to add some silk fibers. I wish I had done that while they were dry because they were hard to manage on the wet wool.

I’ve put the netting over the stacks, poured some hot water on them, and rubbed on a little soap. Then you rub and rub with hands and bubble wrap, flipping the stacks over and rubbing some more.

Eventually I removed the netting and rubbed with the bubble wrap directly on the wool. Look for the wool to form a “skin” and the individual fibers to not move on the surface.
When they are holding together pretty well, I roll them up in the bubble wrap, then in a towel, and roll back and forth about 30 times.

Then open it out, reposition the stacks 90 degrees and repeat. Eventually roll north, south, east and west.

During the rolling I found that the donut “resist” helped keep the pieces round, and eventually you could tell that the wool was shrinking smaller than the donut, as it began to buckle. I also noticed that a thick ridge formed at the edges. I had Merino wool which felts readily. With other breeds you might need to add hot water and soap now and then to get it to felt.

The first flower I cut the ridge off, and made the two layers the same diameter. Then I slit the layers and rounded the corners for 5 petals.

The next time, I cut the top layer a little to the inside so the bottom layer would be larger and have the thick edge. The two layers are joined in the center through the hole.

Leave the donut between the layers. I put the flower between two pieces of bubble wrap and rubbed them together to soften out the cut edges.

I had to keep checking that the edges were not felting to one another, and pull them back apart. Rinse in hot and then cold water.

To shape the flower, I left the donut in, wrapped the flower around a golf ball, then pulled the netting tight around the ball.

I ran very hot water over the ball, and then rolled it vigorously around on the towel.

Then I slipped the donut off the flower, and wrapped and rolled again because it still needed some shaping. I think you could put the flower with the donut inside around the ball and stuff it in the toe of a nylon sock tie the sock, and toss it in the washer.

Now I let it air dry. It took about a day to get really dry.
For the flower centers, I made soft felt “beads. I started with two pieces of roving about 6” long and 1” wide.

I roll one snugly around a finger, slip it off, and roll the other one on at right angles to make a neat little package.

Then I dip it in hot water, lay it on the bubble wrap, and get some soap on my hands.

I cup my hand over the ball and use it like a “cage” to roll the ball around on the bubble wrap, while applying almost no pressure. I like to change the direction I’m rolling, clockwise and counter-clockwise.

Soon you can feel the ball has more firmness against the palm of your hand, and you can press harder. When it is pretty firm you can pick it up and roll it hard between your hands. This sequence will keep the ball from folding and getting a crease.

When the flower and centers are dry, you get to play with your beads, crystals, wire, buttons and stuff. Then you can decide to stitch it directly to a hat or garment, or stitch it to a pin back. I got lazy and used glue and wire to decorate this one. Maybe I’ll have time to play with beads and stitching on the others later. I’ve added some leaves that I needle felted and wet felted, but that’s another story.

It was interesting to make the two layers join through the hole in the bubble wrap resist, but I realized that since I’m going to stitch a center to them it is not necessary. I do like making two layers at once, so I think I would try a round resist without a hole next. I also like how the form helps keep the shape until the petals are cut. I think it would be fun to try cutting the petals into different shapes, like pointed, and cut a different number of petals.

I don’t roll it real hard for the flower, but stop when I can still make it flatten a little. Then rinse, and squeeze dry in a towel.